



MCGREGOR RANGE

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT

August 2001

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Las Cruces Field Office**

**Prepared by
URS**



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Las Cruces Field Office
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IN REPLY REFER TO:

1610 (03000)

AUG 17 2001

Dear Interested Party:

The scoping period for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) to address BLM's management of the public land withdrawn for military use within McGregor Range in southern Otero County, New Mexico concluded on July 6, 2001. During the scoping period, two formal scoping meetings were held. They were held in Alamogordo and Las Cruces on June 20 and 21, 2001, respectively.

The enclosed Scoping Report provides the results of the scoping meetings as well as a summary of all written comments received. The purpose of the Scoping Report is to categorize and summarize issues and concerns raised by the public. They will be included in the Draft RMPA and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

BLM will continue to consider public comments throughout the planning and EIS process. When you receive a copy of the Draft RMPA/EIS, which is scheduled for release in early 2002, you will have the opportunity to review the document and inform BLM whether the issues and concerns you raised during scoping were adequately addressed.

Thank you for your participation in the EIS process to date. The involvement of private citizens, industry, interested organizations, and agencies is essential to the preparation of a complete RMPA and EIS.

A web page has been established for this planning effort and it can be found at the following web site: http://www.nm.blm.gov/www/lcfo/mcgregor/mcgregor_rmpa_eis.html.

We will post this Scoping Summary Report as well as future documents and informational letters, as we proceed with this planning process. If you need additional information, or if you have questions or comments, please contact Tom Phillips at (505) 525-4377.

Sincerely,

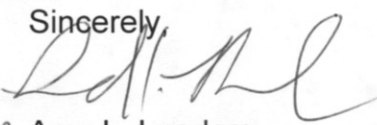

for Amy L. Lueders
Field Manager

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1 – Introduction	1
Background	1
Scoping Process	3
Section 2 – Scoping Activities	4
Current Management Direction.....	4
Public Scoping Activities	4
Section 3 – Results of Scoping.....	8
Introduction	8
Comment Analysis	8
Section 4 – RMPA/EIS Summation.....	15

LIST OF MAP AND TABLES

Map 1	RMPA Planning Area.....	2
Table 1	Public Scoping Meetings.....	7
Table 2	Public Scoping Meeting Attendance and Comments.....	8
Table 3	Comments and Issues from Scoping	16

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

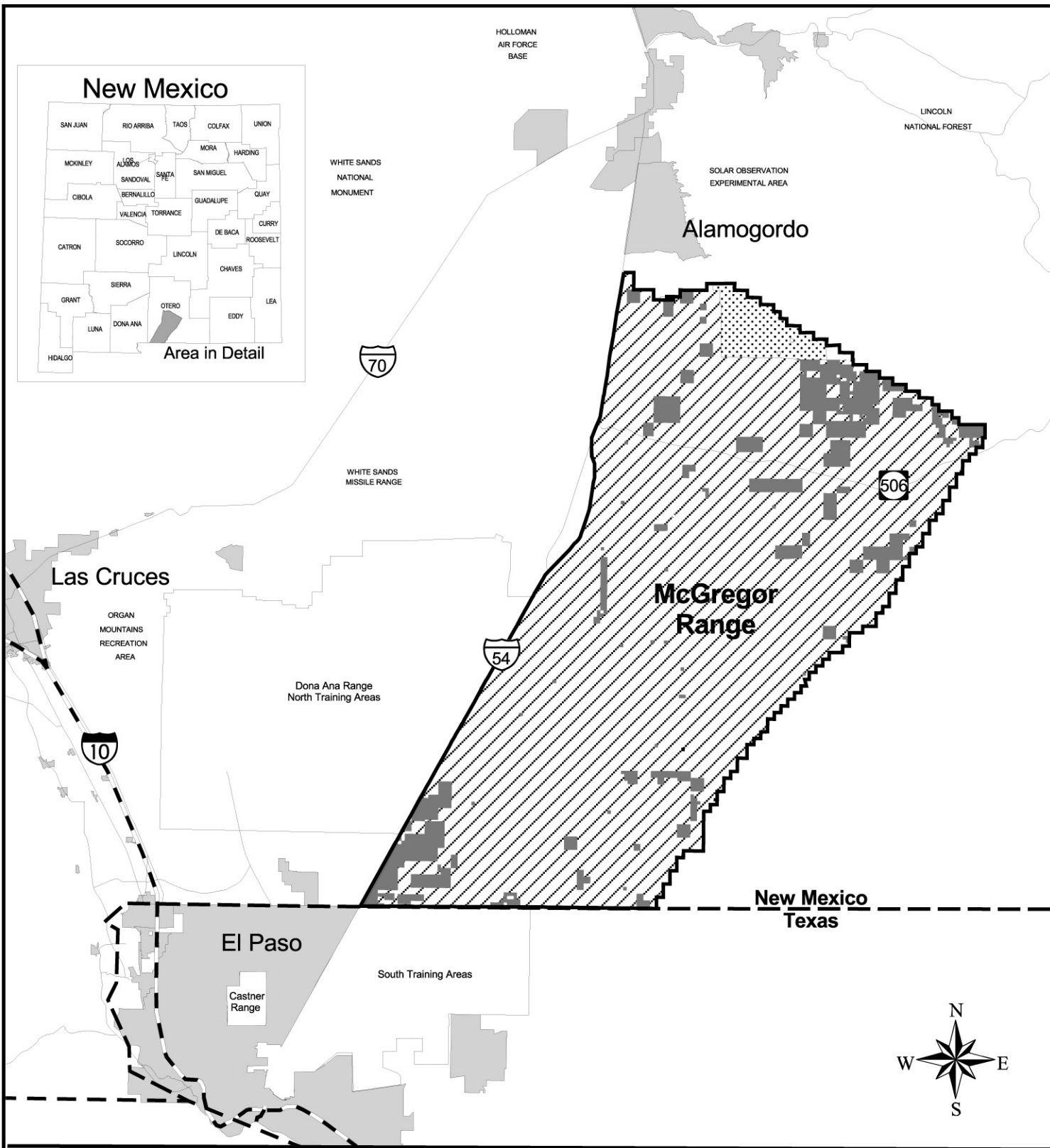
The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Las Cruces Field Office, is preparing a Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address BLM's management of the public land withdrawn for military use within McGregor Range in southern Otero County, New Mexico (Map 1). Both the BLM and U.S. Army have environmental responsibilities within McGregor Range. Therefore, BLM, the lead Federal agency for the preparation of the RMPA/EIS, will work in concert with the U.S. Army, Ft. Bliss, which will participate as a cooperating agency.

Previous environmental and planning documents have been prepared to address resource management on McGregor Range, including documents prepared by BLM and the U.S. Army, Ft. Bliss. However, the Military Lands Withdrawal Act (Public Law [PL] 106-65) directs BLM to manage the withdrawn public land within McGregor Range under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and to develop a management plan for the range. In addition to the legislative requirement to prepare an RMPA, ongoing military training has changed land uses on portions of McGregor Range, and BLM has updated resource management guidelines and/or requirements since the previous RMPA.

BLM is developing the RMPA/EIS to be consistent with current laws and regulations, and provide the public an opportunity to review the decision-making for resource management on the range. Recognizing the land use restrictions necessary to allow military uses, BLM's management actions on this withdrawn public land must be compatible with the military use and consistent with the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. The RMPA/EIS will help determine how resources are managed on the range, and will result in a plan for management of the resources that is consistent with military use.

The EIS studies also will identify the potential impacts that implementation of the RMPA could have on the environment and identify appropriate measures to mitigate those impacts. The EIS will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA, PL 106-65, FLPMA, and other associated regulations.

Integral to the planning and environmental process is the public participation program, which keeps relevant agencies and the interested public informed about the project's progress. Opportunities for public participation including scoping, public meetings, updated mailings, and hearings will occur at key milestones throughout the process.



McGregor Range

- Public Land Withdrawn for Military Use
- Military Acquired Land
- Public Water Reserve Withdrawal
- Lincoln National Forest
- Private

Urban Areas



Scale in Miles

Map 1 McGregor Range RMPA/EIS Planning Area

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use within other data. Original data was compiled from various sources. Spatial information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This information may be updated without notification.



SCOPING PROCESS

The first step in the RMPA/EIS process is “scoping,” the results of which are summarized in this report. Scoping is a process conducted early in a project that is open to agencies and the public to identify the range, or scope, of issues to be addressed during the planning and environmental studies for the RMPA/EIS. The lead agency responsible for the preparation of the document solicits comments from relevant agencies and the public, organizes and analyzes all of the comments received, and then identifies the issues that will be addressed during the planning and environmental studies; that is, the scope of analysis for the RMPA/EIS. The duration of the scoping process is at least 30 days.

The remainder of this scoping report provides an explanation of the scoping activities and a summary of the comments received. The complete record of scoping, including the *Federal Register* Notice of Intent, scoping notice, media release, meeting displays, scoping meeting presentation slides, meeting attendance lists, oral comments, and written comments is on file and available for review at the BLM Las Cruces Field Office.

SECTION 2 - SCOPING ACTIVITIES

CURRENT MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

First, BLM reviewed recent legislation regarding McGregor Range and consulted existing planning and environmental documents relevant to McGregor Range. The purpose was to understand BLM's current management direction and issues identified in preparation of the previous documents in context with the recent legislation. The three most relevant documents are PL 106-65, FLPMA, and the *Resource Management Plan Amendment, McGregor Range, 1990*.

PL 106-65, which was passed by Congress in 1999, withdrew large tracts of public land for military purposes including approximately 608,000 acres within McGregor Range. The law directed the Secretary of the Interior to manage the withdrawn public land within McGregor Range under FLPMA and to develop a management plan for the land within 2 years of the law's enactment.

FLPMA, passed by Congress in 1976, and its implementing regulations require the BLM to prepare Resource Management Plans (RMPs) to provide management direction for the public lands. The objective of land use planning is to ensure that public land is managed under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.

The intent of the 1990 RMPA for McGregor Range was to provide general direction for managing the withdrawn public land on McGregor Range and guide all resource actions to achieve plan decisions. However, the 1990 RMPA does not address resource management guidelines and requirements that have been developed or updated since the 1990 RMPA. Therefore, BLM must update the 1990 RMPA and modify how it manages the resources.

PUBLIC SCOPING ACTIVITIES

BLM's intent during the public scoping process was to inform the public about the RMPA/EIS and provide opportunities for the public to provide comments and identify issues and questions to consider when developing the plan. During the 30-day period, BLM announced the commencement of the RMPA/EIS through various means, invited written comments, and held public scoping meetings to solicit input. These activities are described in detail below.

Announcements

The RMPA/EIS and scoping meetings were announced through the *Federal Register*, a Scoping Notice, and a media release.

Federal Register

The RMPA/EIS and public scoping process began officially with the publication in the *Federal Register* of BLM's Notice of Intent (NOI) to amend the RMP, prepare an EIS, and conduct public scoping meetings. The NOI was published on May 15, 2001.

Scoping Notice

In addition to the NOI, BLM prepared a scoping notice to send to interested parties. The scoping notice included a brief letter from the Las Cruces Field Office Manager and a comment form. The notice provided a brief history and background information, a description of agency environmental responsibilities, an explanation of the planning process, project schedule, agency responsibilities, preliminary planning criteria and resource concerns, and anticipated decisions.

Preliminary planning criteria to guide the development of the RMPA/EIS include the following:

- resource management actions shall not impair, and shall be compatible and consistent with, military use in accordance with the Military Lands Withdrawal Act (PL 106-65), and comply with laws, executive orders, and regulations; and be consistent with the principles of multiple use and sustained yield
- clarify BLM and Ft. Bliss management responsibilities
- develop reasonable and achievable resource outputs within available technology and budget constraints
- provide for public access to and across McGregor Range where compatible
- provide for mineral development where compatible
- identify water use needs and any impacts on existing water resources
- identify the sub-basins for McGregor Range and use as the organizational framework for water resources evaluation
- maintain or improve vegetation conditions
- identify any infestations of noxious/invasive weeds and provide for management alternatives to address existing and potential problems
- provide for the harvesting of vegetation products if compatible
- provide for the protection and management of the sensitive, state-listed, and Federally listed plant and animal species

- provide for livestock grazing where compatible
- provide for the protection and management of wildlife habitat
- identify any impacts of predator management
- provide for hunting in concert with biological cycles when possible
- provide for recreational uses where compatible
- identify any impacts of off-highway vehicle (OHV) use
- maintain or enhance visual quality
- provide for the management of cultural and paleontological resources
- continue to provide for the management of the Culp Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) under Interim Management Policy procedures pending Congressional determination

Preliminary resource concerns include the following:

Human Environment

- lands and access
- visual resources
- livestock grazing
- social and economic conditions
- recreation
- unexploded ordnance/hazardous materials

Cultural Environment

- cultural resources
- paleontological resources

Natural Environment

- air quality
- water resources
- soils
- geology and minerals
- vegetation
- wildlife
- special-status species
- special management areas (WSAs, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern [ACECs])
- fire management

Also, the notice announced the upcoming public scoping meetings and other public participation opportunities. The comment form included with the scoping notice asked readers to submit comments related to the RMPA/EIS and to indicate whether or not they were interested in receiving future project information. For the convenience of the reviewer, the comment form was self-addressed and postage paid. The scoping notice was distributed to approximately 400 individuals, agencies, and interested organizations in early June 2001. The mailing list will be reviewed and updated throughout the RMPA/EIS process.

Media Release

A media release introducing the project and announcing the scoping meetings was prepared and issued on June 11, 2001 by BLM to local and regional newspapers, television, and radio.

Public Scoping Meetings

Two public scoping meetings were conducted by the BLM as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1 PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS	
Meeting Date	Meeting Location
Wednesday, June 20, 2001	Alamogordo, New Mexico
Thursday, June 21, 2001	Las Cruces, New Mexico

Several displays illustrating or explaining components of the RMPA/EIS were stationed around the meeting room for those in attendance to review. Representatives of BLM and URS (the consultant assisting BLM) were available to explain the displays and answer questions.

Each meeting began with a presentation by representatives from BLM and Ft. Bliss. The presentation described the project background and agency missions (BLM and Ft. Bliss), addressed the need for the RMPA/EIS, described the planning and EIS process, presented the project schedule, and discussed opportunities for public participation.

After the presentation, comments and questions were received from the public. To ensure a clear and accurate record, the comments and questions were recorded in writing as stated. Also, those in attendance at the meetings were given comment forms to complete and submit.

SECTION 3 – RESULTS OF SCOPING

INTRODUCTION

The scoping period, which ended on July 6, 2001, included both written comments submitted to BLM and oral comments recorded at the public scoping meetings.

A total of 42 comment forms and letters were submitted to BLM. The scoping period lasted from May 15 to July 6, 2001; however, comments received after that date are included in this report.

A total of 29 people attended the meetings. A summary of meeting attendance and oral comments is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2 PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING ATTENDANCE AND COMMENTS			
Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Number in Attendance	Number of Oral Comments Received at Meetings
Wednesday, June 20, 2001	Alamogordo, New Mexico	12	17
Thursday, June 21, 2001	Las Cruces, New Mexico	17	30
Total		29	47

All of the comments and questions were compiled, reviewed, and analyzed to identify the issues to be addressed in the RMPA/EIS. The remainder of this section summarizes the comments received.

COMMENT ANALYSIS

The comments received to date primarily address the RMPA/EIS process; agency coordination and management responsibility; military activities; leasing, exploration, development and production; lands and access; resource concerns; recreation; fire management; hazardous materials; and mitigation. The comments and issues are summarized below and listed by category in Table 3 at the end of this report.

RMPA/EIS Process

How this RMPA/EIS relates to the RMPA/EIS for Federal Fluid Minerals Leasing and Development in Sierra and Otero Counties (current BLM planning effort) was questioned. Specifically, a commentor asked how the effects of each of these actions would be addressed if

both actions involve Otero Mesa. Also, BLM was asked to explain how the cumulative effects analysis would be accomplished since both RMPA/EISs would address fluid minerals.

Several alternatives were suggested, including an alternative that would provide for no leasing on McGregor Range, and preservation and enhancement of wildlife resources and their habitats for consumptive and non-consumptive uses.

There were recommendations for the scope of the RMPA. BLM was asked to consider all decisions and requests from other Federal agencies related to endangered species, habitat preservation, and conservation planning when developing the RMPA/EIS. Also, it was suggested that the RMPA/EIS should not be limited to resources on Otero Mesa and the mountain foothills.

A comment was received regarding the NEPA process for oil and gas leases and the adequacy of programmatic NEPA documents in assessing the impacts of oil and gas leasing. A point was made that oil and gas leases should be analyzed fully before the lease is granted (not at the application for permit to drill stage). The commentor stated that NEPA requires an EIS for non-no surface occupancy (NSO) proposed oil and gas leases as they represent a full and irretrievable commitment of resources, and a programmatic NEPA document is not sufficient. The commentor stated that a detailed, tiered study should be conducted before issuing a mineral lease. The commentor further stated that, unless BLM mandates an irrevocable NSO stipulation at the time of lease, NEPA documentation at that time must include a full discussion of alternatives and potential impacts. The commentor referred to numerous case law citations in support of these points.

Lands and Access

Questions and concerns regarding lands and access to McGregor Range primarily were related to public access to and within the range. Some commentors were concerned about the limits placed on public access to the range, and one commentor expressed concern that the government can justify all of its actions with regard to public use of the range. BLM was asked to allow a reasonable amount of public use including public access to archaeological sites. BLM also was asked how often the range is closed to the public.

It was suggested that activities on Otero Mesa and the area north of Highway 506 have restrictions so that they remain undamaged and unspoiled. One commentor asked what are the plans for use of U.S. Army-owned land on the west side of U.S. Highway 54 after it is widened to four lanes. BLM was asked how access, roads, recreation activities, and plant collection activities that cross the boundary between the Sacramento Ranger District (U.S. Forest Service) and McGregor Range would be addressed.

It was suggested that roads should be designated as open or closed. One commentor recommended that BLM implement a “closed unless marked open” policy on lands to limit damage from off-road vehicle use. Concern was expressed about surface disturbances that could affect preservation of existing natural resources. One commentor was concerned about the management of access for preservation of natural resources. It was suggested that BLM conduct a comprehensive survey of all roads, ways, and trails within McGregor Range to determine what

routes are valid; what routes are not needed because they are duplicative; what routes constitute illegal trespass on private land, the WSA, or wilderness; and what routes cause significant unnecessary damage to wildlife, water, and/or soil resources. BLM was asked to close all routes, in accordance with Executive Orders 11644 and 11989, that are duplicative, serve no specific purpose, or cause damage to natural resources. BLM also was asked to protect remaining roadless areas and develop maximum road density standards to minimize excessive and unnecessary road building while protecting natural resources.

One commentor asked BLM to address future development of utility corridors (e.g., pipelines, transmission lines) on McGregor Range.

Resource Concerns

Public comments on the preliminary resource concerns focused on protection of resources, including the following:

- water availability and use
- spread and introduction of noxious weeds
- protection and preservation of grasslands (i.e., ACECs and black and blue grama)
- potential impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat and current status of wildlife
- preservation of Otero Mesa as a wildlife corridor
- potential impacts of military activities on wildlife
- potential habitat fragmentation and destruction
- preservation of biodiversity
- potential impacts on raptors and songbirds from electrocution and collisions with communications towers
- protection of the region from unnecessary encroachment and degradation
- potential impacts on species from oil and gas exploration

- protection of lands and identification of habitat for endangered, special status, and important species
- damage caused by grazing and suitability of units for grazing
- potential impacts on vegetative communities from grazing
- supported continued grazing operations
- protection and inventory of cultural and historic resources and assessment of the effects on cultural resources from changes in land use
- suggested identification and survey for new WSAs, ACECs, and roadless areas
- personal observation of special status species habitat
- continued management of the Culp Canyon WSA
- economic analysis and beneficial economic impact from oil and gas exploration; one commentor noted the positive economic impact that could be gained through leases, taxes, and royalties from oil and gas production found in the Orogrande Basin

Fire Management

Concern was raised over the timing of live fire training and fire hazards with regard to notification procedures when the fire danger is high. One commentor asked who is responsible for notifying the Army officers in charge of the training when the fire risk is particularly high. The commentor also asked whether BLM can regulate the timing of live fire training when fire danger is high.

Some commentors asked that fire management be highlighted in the RMPA/EIS, to include an explanation of hot and cold fires, fire dangers, and explanations of potential impacts from sparks, excess propellant, and hot debris. The development of Fire Management Plans/Land Fire Regimes also was suggested.

Recreation

Commentors generally were opposed to limiting public access to the range. One suggestion was to develop a public and agency working group to address recreational access.

A number of commentors were concerned specifically about the cancellation of the most recent hunt and, in general, the fluctuations in allowable public use of the range for hunting and other recreational uses. A request was made for BLM and the New Mexico Department of Game and

Fish to cooperatively expedite any actions necessary to re-open the range for hunting. One commentor suggested that hunters would be willing to pay fees to ensure that hunts are not closed due to staff shortages.

Commentors also were concerned about off-road or OHV use and the damage that can be caused by OHVs to soil, watersheds, stream channels, riparian forests, vegetation, and wildlife; habitat reduction and fragmentation; erosion; fire ignition; disruption of reproduction and migration of sensitive species; disruption to ecological processes such as dispersion; introduction of exotic plant species; unauthorized wood cutting; and poisoning due to OHV emissions. One commentor called for the management of OHV use in accordance with Executive Orders 11644 and 11989.

One commentor opposed excessive recreational use on McGregor Range because more problems would occur with increased recreational use.

Hazardous Materials

BLM was asked to include in the RMPA/EIS a list of hazardous waste sites and suspected hazardous materials sites on McGregor Range and indicate their cleanup status. The commentor also suggested that agreements be reached with the U.S. Army to specify the Department of Defense's (DOD) responsibilities for hazardous waste cleanup, especially unexploded ordnance on McGregor Range.

Agency Coordination and Management Responsibility

The importance of coordination and cooperation between Federal agencies (particularly BLM and Ft. Bliss) for the management of McGregor Range was mentioned several times. Several commentors identified the need for clarification of responsibilities between BLM and Ft. Bliss, particularly so that potential negative effects of either agency's actions can be recognized and responded to appropriately. Concern also was expressed about whether Ft. Bliss can overrule management decisions made by BLM. A definition of the role of the U.S. Forest Service in the management of McGreogor Range, and cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service for management decisions, also were requested.

Commentors suggested coordinated and combined studies to monitor range conditions and biological resources. One commentor recommended a division of management between BLM and Ft. Bliss whereby BLM would manage the range according to FLPMA. Another commentor's opinion was that BLM should not attempt to circumvent plans outlined in Ft. Bliss planning documents (Mission and Master Plan EIS and McGregor Range Land Withdrawal Legislative EIS).

Military Activities

Questions were raised regarding the current and future level of military training on McGregor Range, and the potential for expansion of military training onto Otero Mesa and the area north of Highway 506. Some commentors requested information on military training protocols, objectives, and training schedules. Commentors primarily were concerned about the impact of military activities on McGregor Range resources and the potential for expansion of military activities onto previously undisturbed areas.

Mineral Leasing

A representative of the oil and gas industry stated that McGregor Range should be open to oil and gas leasing and believes that there is significant potential to find commercial hydrocarbon reserves in the Orogrande Basin and under McGregor Range.

Some commentors expressed support of withdrawal of all lands on McGregor Range from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws and mineral leasing and geothermal leasing laws. It was suggested that BLM use its authority and retain the right to close the range to oil and gas leasing, particularly if the proposed leasing is found to have the potential to cause irreparable damage to wildlife, watersheds, vegetation, endangered species, and potential wilderness. One commentor asked that BLM consider all issues regarding the appropriateness of leasing before new leases are granted. BLM was asked to protect all special management areas from oil and gas drilling and leasing.

BLM was asked to seriously consider safety with regard to military operations and oil and gas facilities if leasing is intended.

Mineral Exploration, Development, and Production

A representative of the oil and gas industry recommended that exploration and development of oil and gas reserves under McGregor Range and in all of the Orogrande Basin be opened up, and recommended a balance between protecting the environment and meeting the nation's energy needs. The representative also noted several studies have found that the Orogrande Basin has all the right components for oil and natural gas accumulations, has a high potential for oil and gas, is underexplored, and has numerous potential reservoirs and sufficient source rocks for oil and gas accumulations. It was suggested that a balance between environmental protection and natural resource development should be reached. Concern also was expressed for meeting the energy needs of the country through development of domestic energy resources. The representative also was concerned about the length of time it could take for BLM approval for well hookup and development of wells.

Some commentors were opposed to oil and gas exploration and development on McGregor Range. One commentor asked why oil and gas exploration is included in this process if the language in PL 106-65 does not permit it. Concern was expressed about the permanent

degradation of unique areas (such as unbroken, high-quality sagebrush and grassland communities) from oil and gas development. It was suggested that no construction be allowed for any natural gas, oil, or refined product pipelines.

BLM was asked which areas would be open for oil and gas exploration and if there was a possibility for oil and gas exploration on Otero Mesa.

Mitigation

One commentor expressed concern about mitigation.

SECTION 4 – RMPA/EIS SUMMATION

The comments and issues from scoping will assist in determining the scope of the studies to be completed and will be addressed in the RMPA/EIS. The next steps in the RMPA/EIS process include the following:

- develop a general management direction for each resource area
- develop a reasonable range of alternatives, based on public comments from scoping, to address and evaluate in the RMPA/EIS
- compile a resource inventory that reflects the existing condition of the environment in the analysis area to serve as the baseline for the assessment of potential impacts that could result from the RMPA

BLM will continue to consider public comments throughout the planning and EIS process. The next official opportunity for the public to comment will be when the draft RMPA/EIS is issued for public review, which is planned for early 2002.

TABLE 3

COMMENTS AND ISSUES FROM SCOPING

SUBJECT	COMMENTS/ISSUES
RMPA/EIS Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM must consider all appropriate decisions and requests from other Federal agencies relating to endangered species habitat preservation and conservation planning when developing the RMPA/EIS. • BLM has responsibilities on all of McGregor Range. This RMPA/EIS should not be limited to resources on Otero Mesa and the mountain foothills. • The three-party agreement among New Mexico State University, Ft. Bliss, and BLM for the perpetual care of the ACEC should be added as an appendix to the RMPA/EIS. • Alternatives should include the preservation and enhancement of wildlife resources and their habitats, and the wise management of these wildlife resources for consumptive and nonconsumptive users, both civilian and military. • BLM should complete a full analysis under NEPA before leasing any parcels for oil and gas exploration and drilling. • NEPA requires an EIS for non-NSO proposed oil and gas leases as they represent a full and irrevocable commitment of resources. • Future surface occupancy must be prohibited unless new NEPA documentation is prepared that would allow for non-NSO oil and gas leases. • Oil and gas leases should be fully analyzed before the lease is granted and not at the application for permit to drill stage. A programmatic NEPA document is not sufficient; a detailed, tiered NEPA study should be conducted before issuing a mineral lease. Unless BLM mandates an irrevocable NSO stipulation at the time of lease sale, NEPA documentation must at that time include a full discussion of alternatives and potential impacts. • Cumulative effects must be considered for oil and gas leasing and development. • There should be an alternative in the EIS that provides for no leasing on McGregor Range. • How does this process relate to the Otero and Sierra Counties Oil and Gas (RMPA/EIS) process? Since the Otero and Sierra Counties Oil and Gas RMPA/EIS and this RMPA/EIS for McGregor Range both address fluid minerals, how will cumulative impacts analysis be accomplished? How will effects be separated if both actions involve Otero Mesa? • The RMPA/EIS should allow for additional special designations when areas are found to qualify for special designation status under FLPMA.
Lands and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will access/roads/recreation that cross the boundary between the Sacramento Ranger District (Lincoln National Forest) and McGregor Range be addressed? Also, how will plant collection between McGregor Range and the U.S. Forest Service be addressed? • Concerns over the limits on public access on McGregor Range and keeping the oryx population on the range under control. • Would like to maintain public access to known archaeological sites. • How often is the range closed to the public? • Activities on Otero Mesa and the area north of Highway 506 should have restricted activities. Would like to see those areas undamaged and unspoiled (minimize damage). • Concerned about roads (should be designated open or closed) and any surface disturbance that could affect preservation of existing natural resources. • Concerned about BLM's ability to manage access for preservation of natural resources.

TABLE 3

COMMENTS AND ISSUES FROM SCOPING

SUBJECT	COMMENTS/ISSUES
Lands and Access (con't)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public uses and resource extraction (mineral, livestock, etc.) should be low priority. Concerned about public use and access of McGregor Range and concerned that the government can justify any and all of its actions with regard to public use of the range. Concerned about access to the Lincoln National Forest through McGregor Range, any fuels activity planned, and plant gathering activity. Would like to see a reasonable amount of public use. What are the plans for use of U.S. Army-owned land on the west side of U.S. Highway 54 after it is widened to four lanes? Supports historical public uses of Otero Mesa and the mountain foothills including grazing, hunting, hiking, camping, bird watching, and scientific research. Conduct a comprehensive survey of all roads, ways, and trails within McGregor Range to determine what routes are valid; what routes are not needed because they are duplicative; what routes are in illegal trespass on private land, WSAs, or wilderness; and what routes cause significant unnecessary damage to wildlife, water, and/or soil resources. Close all routes that are duplicative, serve no specific purpose, or cause damage to natural resources in accordance with Executive Orders 11644 and 11989. Develop maximum road density standards to minimize excessive and unnecessary road building while protecting natural resources that are damaged by the existence or overabundance of roads. Recommend BLM implement a "closed unless marked open" policy on all lands under its management regarding off road vehicle use. Protect remaining roadless areas. Will BLM address future development of utility corridors (pipelines, transmission lines)?
Wilderness Study Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is any part of the range salvageable for a WSA? Is there potential for expansion of the existing WSA? The Culp Canyon WSA should continue to be managed to preserve its wilderness values until Congress makes a determination to designate as a Wilderness Area. BLM should use the new BLM Wilderness Inventory Handbook to complete new surveys of McGregor Range for wilderness potential. BLM should undertake a comprehensive survey of McGregor Range to determine if any roadless or others wilderness quality lands still exist there. The planning area should be inventoried for other potential wilderness areas and other designations as part of the planning . The RMPA/EIS should recognize, for preservation and protection, those areas of McGregor Range that have existing special designations (Culp Canyon WSA, ACEC).
Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that concerns of custom and culture are analyzed. Concerned about the protection of cultural and historic resources. Would like to see Indian artifacts on the range preserved. What are the secondary effects on cultural resources resulting from changes in land use in the vicinity of military acquired parcels, and displacement of activities from those parcels to other areas?

TABLE 3

COMMENTS AND ISSUES FROM SCOPING

SUBJECT	COMMENTS/ISSUES
Cultural Resources (con't)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is BLM doing to inventory cultural resources in the area covered by the RMPA? • How is the BLM addressing section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act requirements for inventory? • What is the nature of the database used for making cultural resources management decisions on the BLM lands not included in direct military impact areas? • How will traditional Apache land use in the area be documented and addressed? • Interested in reviewing cultural resource inventory/survey issues. • The documented archaeological and historic sites, including historic home sites and out buildings, qualify for special designation under FLPMA, and need special protection and preservation.
Vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider spread of noxious weeds from activities on McGregor Range. Protections should be designed to ensure that there is no introduction of vegetative weed species into native grasslands. • Protect grasslands. New uses should be planned so as to not negatively affect grasslands. • Survey information demonstrating the quality and importance of grasslands (especially black grama and blue grama grasslands) should be incorporated into planning documents. • Current status and ecological importance of grassland communities should be highlighted in the EIS. • Grassland areas must be preserved and should be assigned a special designation. Areas currently off limits to vehicular traffic, grazing, and mineral development should remain that way. • Would like to see integrated conservation of grasslands, particularly habitat of aplomado falcon; use of habitat model for management when completed and available. • Inventory by the New Mexico Natural Heritage Program should continue.
Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the issue of raptor electrocution on McGregor Range. • Review the issue of songbird collisions with communications towers on McGregor Range. • What is the current status of wildlife on the range and what are the potential impacts from changes on the range? • Concerned about preserving Otero Mesa because it serves as vital corridor between the Sacramento Mountains and Guadalupe Mountains for faunal movement and interaction. • How will military activities affect pronghorn, black-tailed prairie dogs, and alpomado falcon, and riparian and desert grassland habitat? • Concerned about species. • Prevent habitat fragmentation and destruction. Concerned that oil and gas development, improper grazing and military activity may contribute to habitat destruction or fragmentation through direct impacts and the creation of access roads. • Take more proactive measures to ensure the protection of wildlife and wildland resources in the McGregor Range. • Concerned about managing biodiversity. • The concept of establishing a national conservation area and/or wilderness designation for portions of McGregor Range if these actions result in the protection of the region from unnecessary encroachment and degradation was recommended. • Be sure wildlife habitat management practices receive priority consideration.

TABLE 3

COMMENTS AND ISSUES FROM SCOPING

SUBJECT	COMMENTS/ISSUES
Special Status Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect endangered, special status, and important species. • Biological inventories should be conducted to locate and identify important species and habitats in order to prevent loss and habitat destruction. • Land that makes up McGregor Range must be protected for endangered, special status and important species. The planning should be considered central to Federal species restoration and conservation efforts. • It is reasonable to assume that habitat management could support populations of aplomado falcon and mountain plover on parts of McGregor Range. • Personally observed the existence of aplomado falcon nesting habitat in small sloped canyons on the Otero Mesa escarpment that intersect the portion of the Site 10 Road, which leads from McGregor Range Camp up to the rim of Otero Mesa escarpment. Also observed golden eagle nesting habitat in Culp Canyon and have seen bald eagles flying over the mountain foothills. • BLM has done an excellent job attaining resource improvement objectives as well as adapting for sensitive species and the primary needs of the military. • BLM should undertake a thorough review of the land under its management for all ACECs and areas of critical habitat for threatened and endangered species. Any tracts of land identified to have special resources or characteristics that should be protected should be set aside as ACECs, inventoried roadless areas, or Section 202 WSAs. • Any information from Ft. Bliss habitat studies for threatened and endangered species, and special status species, should be included in the RMPA/EIS. • Concern about the effects of oil and gas exploration on conservation at McGregor Range (i.e., conservation of the aplomado falcon).
Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address water extraction on McGregor Range. • Concerned about water management and use. The RMPA should address water issues. • Water should be allocated not only for livestock, but also for wildlife. • The unlined sewage lagoon on McGregor Range should be removed and a septic tank system installed. Concerned about small area in one corner of the lagoon, which is contaminated with hazardous waste. • Concern about water supply in Orogrande. Questioned reasoning for U.S. Army possibly denying water to Orogrande. • Emergency supplies of water should be available for the community of Orogrande and for fire suppression, preferably sources in the Tularosa Basin.
Social and Economic Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about economic analysis. • Address beneficial economic impact from oil and gas exploration. • Ensure that any and all economic impacts are analyzed.
Fire Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If BLM is responsible for extinguishing range fires caused by military activities, the U.S. Army, Ft. Bliss should reimburse the BLM for all fire fighting expenses and any required restoration work. • Does BLM regulate the timing of live fire missile training and testing on McGregor Range during times of high fire risk? • Danger warnings should be sent by the responsible agency (BLM or Ft. Bliss) in a timely manner to the Army officers who

<p>TABLE 3</p> <p>COMMENTS AND ISSUES FROM SCOPING</p> <p>COMMENTS/ISSUES</p>	
SUBJECT	
Fire Management (con't)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actually make the fire/no fire decisions. • U.S. Army should have agreements with the U.S. Air Force and the militaries they host to address the potential for range fires ignited by spotting charges. • The EIS should highlight fire dangers and explain the potential impacts from sparks, excess propellant, and hot debris. • It is important that the differences between hot and cold fires be explained in the documents. • Would like to see Fire Management Plans/Land Fire Regimes developed. • Concerned about fire management.
Livestock Grazing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address continued grazing operations on McGregor Range. • Concerned about damage caused by grazing. • What percentage of forage is allowed for grazing, and is the grazing program flexible enough to address natural reduction in forage? Would like to see 35 to 40 percent use and a plan to reduce grazing in dry years. • How much land is available for grazing versus other uses? What type of uses? • Would like to see grazing continue on the range. • Current availability of grazing permits for referencing interested ranch customers. • To appropriately plan for and manage areas for grazing, BLM must comprehensively survey all units in the planning area to assess their suitability for grazing. • High-quality sagebrush communities and black grama-blue grama grassland communities should be restricted from grazing because of their current rarity and importance to wildlife. • Resource values within McGregor Range are completely compatible with livestock grazing. • BLM should undertake a comprehensive survey of its grazing allotments to assess the suitability of grazing on all of its land with attention to areas that do not have sufficient vegetative ground cover to sustain continued grazing or have special characteristics that make them unsuitable for grazing.
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about the fluctuation in the use of the range for hunting and/or viewing of wildlife. Concern that the public is restricted from recreational use on the range. • The most recent closures of the range to big game hunting, without sound biological justification, are unacceptable. BLM and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish should cooperatively expedite any actions necessary to re-open the range for hunting. • Biologically sound, long-term management programs for use of the wildlife resources on McGregor Range should be established and incorporated into any future uses of the range, including both consumptive and non-consumptive uses. • There is a perception by the hunting public that the military wishes to unnecessarily expand its operations into the Otero Mesa/Sacramento Foothills area so that it can have justification for withdrawing the area from public recreational use. • Concern about wildlife habitat maintenance and recreational access on McGregor Range. Concerned that hunts have been cancelled on the range. • Would like to see hunts continue on McGregor Range and would be willing to pay fees to ensure hunts are not closed due to staff shortages.

TABLE 3

COMMENTS AND ISSUES FROM SCOPING

SUBJECT	COMMENTS/ISSUES
Recreation (con't)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require that BLM receive notification prior to cancellation of big game hunts by military officials. Opposed to limiting public access (recreation and other uses). Concern about recreational access. A public/agency working group to address recreational access was recommended. Could hunting activities still occur given the military operations? Manage off-road or OHV use in accordance with Executive Orders 11644 and 11989. Concerned about the damage caused by recreational OHVs use to soil, watersheds, stream channels, riparian forests, vegetation, and wildlife; habitat reduction and fragmentation; erosion; fire ignition; disruption of reproduction and migration of sensitive species; disruption to ecological processes such as dispersion; introduction of exotic plant species; unauthorized wood cutting; and poisoning due to OHV emissions. Purposed uses that would have a negative impact on wildlife, wildlife habitat, or the use of these by the general public should be abandoned. Do not allow excessive recreational use on McGregor Range because the more humans that have access to the range the more problems will occur.
Geology/Minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned about river boulder deposit on U.S. Forest Service land on portions of the Sacramento River. Would like to see BLM and the U.S. Forest Service give special protective designation to the river boulder fields in and along the Sacramento River before it is financially feasible to mine them.
Hazardous Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The RMPA/EIS should include a list of hazardous waste sites and suspect hazardous waste sites on McGregor Range and indicate their cleanup status. Agreements should be reached with the U.S. Army that specify DOD's responsibilities for hazardous waste cleanup, especially unexploded ordnance on McGregor Range. Appropriate agreements should be reached with the U.S. Army that specify military responsibilities for the cleanup, especially the cleanup of unexploded ordnance, which may be found on McGregor Range. This information should be included in the EIS. Ft. Bliss should provide a backstop at firing ranges to collect lead bullets. Concerned about what steps are being taken to clean up contamination in the area of Helstef (White Sands Missile Range).
Agency Coordination and Management Responsibility on the Range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be a division of management between BLM and Ft. Bliss. The FLPMA tasks BLM with management of the range. Concern that Ft. Bliss can "override" decisions made by BLM. What is the role of the U.S. Forest Service? Urges inclusion of the U.S. Forest Service. Concerned that the BLM will work with the U.S. Army, Ft. Bliss and not attempt to circumvent the Ft. Bliss Mission and Master Plan Programmatic EIS and McGregor Range Land Withdrawal Renewal Legislative EIS. Foster a good relationship among BLM, Ft. Bliss, and Holloman Air Force Base (AFB). The RMPA/EIS should specify and delegate monitoring responsibilities and duties between BLM and DOD in order to ensure that potential negative effects of any increased or different uses of the lands are recognized and responded to appropriately.

TABLE 3

COMMENTS AND ISSUES FROM SCOPING

SUBJECT	COMMENTS/ISSUES
Agency Coordination and Management Responsibility on the Range (con't)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies conducted by Ft. Bliss need to be combined and coordinated with the work BLM plans to do to monitor range conditions and biological resources on grazing allotments within McGregor Rang and Otero Mesa. The RMPA/EIS must address the manner in which BLM will work cooperatively with the U.S. Forest Service. There should be joint consultation with BLM and U.S. Army on surface disturbances and public input should be sought on any major disturbance or activity that would cause surface disbursement. Do civilian contractors conduct activities in environmentally sound manner?
Military Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will military training occur on weekends? Concern about expansion of military activities on to Otero Mesa and the area north of Highway 506. Concern about low-level flights on Otero Mesa associated with military operations. Have military objectives changed substantially in recent years? Increased use? If there is increased military use, military should consider greater use of advanced technology rather than impacting natural resources. Does the military have a training protocol? Concerned about military use. What can be done to help Holloman AFB be able to have more flying space in the White Sands Missile Range?
Mineral Leasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety concerns regarding military operations and oil and gas facilities must be seriously addressed if leasing is intended. BLM has the authority and should retain the right to close the range to oil and gas leasing and should do so. Support withdrawal of all lands on McGregor Range from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws and mineral leasing and geothermal leasing laws. Ensure that before new leases are granted, all issues regarding the appropriateness of drilling or mining should be considered. BLM should retain and use the right to turn down any proposals to drill or mine on leased lands if the proposed actions are found to have the potential to cause irreparable damage to wildlife, watershed, vegetation, endangered species, and potential wilderness. All special management areas should be protected from oil and gas drilling, leasing, or off-road vehicle abuses.
Mineral Exploration, Development, and Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What areas will be open for oil and gas exploration on McGregor Range? Is there a possibility for oil and gas exploration and development on Otero Mesa? Oil and gas exploration and development can be accomplished in an environmentally sensitive and sound manner. Include opportunities for exploration and production of oil and gas. There needs to be a balance where the environment is protected and natural resources are developed. The New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources (Ron Broadhead) indicates that the Orogrande Basin under the McGregor Range has all the right components for oil and natural gas accumulations. Concerned about the length of time for BLM approval to hook up a discovery well near McGregor Range and drill development wells. There is interest in exploring the deeper parts of the Orogrande Basin under McGregor Range and industry is willing to

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Mineral Exploration, Development, and Production (con't)	<p>take the economic risk associated with exploring for and developing oil and gas reserves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies have found that the Orogrande Basin has all the right components for oil and natural gas accumulations, has a high potential of oil and gas, the basin is underexplored, and the Ft. Bliss military reservation has numerous potential reservoirs and sufficient source rocks for oil and gas accumulations. • Concerned about meeting the energy needs of the country and the development of domestic energy resources to meet the need. • Include provisions to allow water and natural gas exploration and development wells and pipeline easements. Ft. Bliss Ranges, Orogrande, Alamogordo and Holloman AFB's futures will be enhanced tremendously. • Why is oil and gas exploration included in this process if the language in PL 106-65 does not permit it? • Concerned about permanent degradation of unique areas (such as unbroken, high-quality tracts of sagebrush and grassland communities) from oil and gas development. • No construction should be allowed for any natural gas, oil, or refined product pipelines. Pipelines are not compatible with military uses. • Concerned about potential oil and gas drilling that may be planned for McGregor Range and affects on natural resources.
Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned about mitigation.

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